Serpent Crest part five - Survivors in Space, by Paul Magrs

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(The Story so Far - excerpts from all four previous stories.)

MIKE [narrating]: Night falls quickly in Hexford. When the church clock chimes thirteen, the twilight hours officially begin. I'm told that the faulty chime is a quirk, dating back centuries, but it's been put to good use in the village's altered circumstances. When you've had no daylight for three months, you need something to tell you when to go to sleep.

(Door opens and closes.)
DOCTOR 2: Back from patrol already, Mike? You get quicker every evening.
MIKE: Just half an hour tonight, Doctor. It's as quiet as a grave out there, everyone safely tucked up in bed. I stopped half way round and peered through the perimeter. It's very eerie beyond that force shield. Such a barren landscape, stretching out for miles.
DOCTOR 2: Rather makes one glad to be inside the dome, doesn't it?
MIKE: Well, I don't know about that. Is there any tea on the go?
DOCTOR 2: I've got the kettle boiling over the hearth fire. One pot of chai coming up. You know, I've been studying the skies again, plotting the constellations and trying to work out where we are.
MIKE: Oh yes? Any luck?
DOCTOR 2: I'm afraid that without my astral maps I'm quite lost. None of the stars are familiar. Wherever we've been transported to, it's a very long way from Earth's galaxy.
MIKE: That was certainly some tornado that picked us up and dropped us down.
DOCTOR 2: Not a tornado, Mike. Hexford fell through a Time-Space wormhole.
MIKE: I know. And ended up on a moon in the middle of nowhere. Even after three months it still seems unreal. The way the villagers have coped has been incredible. If you'd told them last year that they'd have to live without electricity or power of any kind, they'd have sworn they couldn't cope.
DOCTOR 2; Human beings are relentlessly adaptable, Mike. That's one of their strengths.
MIKE: We're lucky we can breathe inside this force shield.
DOCTOR 2: And enjoy localised gravity as well. On both counts we have the biomesh trees to thank. They will produce oxygen and gravity for as long as we need it.
MIKE: Food and drink though is a different matter. We've rationed supplies as much as we can, but most of the home supplies have gone already. Now we're relying on the MiniMarket and the pub.
DOCTOR 2: Which reminds me. I saw the Vicar and one or two others staggering around on the village green earlier today. I think we should consider limiting people's access to all that beer.
MIKE: You're right, Doctor. I'll form a committee to regulate consumption.
DOCTOR 2: You're doing a fine job of keeping things together, Mike.
MIKE: I remember how the Brigadier used to talk about the loneliness of command. Now I know what ultimate responsibility feels like. I'm glad of your support though, Doctor. The two hundred and fifty three civilians that came here with me are in our care. We can't let them lose hope.
DOCTOR 2: And we shan't. If my latest wheeze comes to fruition, we'll make a breakthrough any day now. Quite literally.

TONGE: If you ask me, gentlemen, the Doctor's plan is sheer folly.
MIKE: We *are* asking you, Reverend. A lot of people will be looking to you for guidance.
TONGE: Then I shall tell them. To put all our lives at risk on a mere whim is completely irresponsible.
DOCTOR 2: But we can't go on as we are for much longer, can we, Reverend Tonge. It simply isn't a sustainable situation.
TONGE: We have supplies. We can get by.

DOCTOR 2: I agree we've done pretty well so far, but this is like being kept in Tupperware. We won't last forever.
MIKE: What you're suggesting is not without its risks, Doctor.
DOCTOR 2: And I am willing to take them.
TONGE: But even if you manage to get past the forcefield, what then? What if there's nothing there, if it's all just barren rock?
DOCTOR 2: The readings I've been picking up suggest there *is* intelligent life out there. Admittedly the transmissions have been faint, and not in a language I recognise, but if there's a chance of being helped, surely we must take it?
TONGE: I still don't like the idea of it. But Mister Yates is our elected leader, so I will be ruled by him. If *he* thinks it's wise to let you poke a hole in the protective shielding around Hexford, well, so be it.
MIKE: The Doctor usually knows what he's talking about, Reverend.
DOCTOR 2: Thank you, Captain Yates, for that measure of faith. In that case, I shall be back off to Nest Cottage immediately. There's no time like the present.
(Door slams.)
TONGE: I wish he'd be careful with those doors. This hall is still Church property. Are you sure we can trust that fellow?
MIKE: The Doctor's the most trustworthy person I know.
TONGE: And because of that you're prepared to risk the lives of everyone here in Hexford? I see.
MIKE: Perhaps we should call a public meeting.
TONGE: Oh, that's always your answer these days. Call another meeting. Huh! As if that's going to save us.

MIKE [narrating]: Leaving the church with the Vicar's hollow laughter ringing in my ears, I crossed the village green, hardly glancing at the hard, star-bright sky above us. There's been perpetual night time in Hexford for the past three months, with only the fires burning on the green and inside each of the cottage windows to illuminate our way. In spite of that, we still tried to maintain a twenty four hour pattern of work, rest, and recreation. Around me, villagers went about their daily tasks and routines, oil lamps and burning torches grasped in their hands. Some of them called out greetings to me. By now, of course, I knew them all by name, and they knew me. Before going into Nest Cottage, I called next door to see my neighbour Deirdre, with whom I'd become rather friendly during the period of our marooning. I was dismayed to find her lying prostrate on her settee, watched over by her cousin, Tish Madoc.

MIKE: Whatever's the matter?
TISH: It's all getting too much for her, Mike. All this talk of going outside the dome. Deirdre's petrified it's going to spell the end for us all. You know how she worries about things.
MIKE: The poor thing. Hello, my dear. Anything I can do?
DEIRDRE: It's good of you to drop in, Mike, but you mustn't waste your time fussing over me. You've got the whole village to look after.
MIKE: Oh, that's easy. I've got my lads to do the heavy work. All two of them. And what could be more important than dropping in to see my favourite neighbour?
DEIRDRE: You're a kind man.
TISH: Your visits cheer her up. She's been down for a while, haven't you, Deirdre? Terrible nightmares.
DEIRDRE: I dreamed that we're all going to be sucked out into space. We all died without even knowing where we were.
MIKE: That's not going to happen.
TISH: I've told her. We're all having bad dreams. This whole thing is one great big nightmare.
DEIRDRE: Mike doesn't want to hear us mouldering on.
MIKE: I brought some goodies from the storeroom at the pub.
DEIRDRE: You shouldn't do that. You've the whole village to look after.
MIKE: And I'm doing so. But I can bring an extra treat for my favourite girls, can't I?
TISH: Oh! Real coffee. But Mister Bush at the Post Office says supplies are dwindling. How long can we last out here?
MIKE: Just let me worry about that. Meanwhile, try to relax.
DEIRDRE: Thank you, Mike. What would we do without you?

MIKE [narrating]: That evening, the Doctor and I ate a rudimentary supper of toad in the hole which I'd flung together. It was one of the things Sergeant Benton had taught me during our time in UNIT.

DOCTOR 2: Oh, quite delicious, Mike.
MIKE: Thank you, Doctor. Perhaps it could have done with a little more garlic salt?
DOCTOR 2: Oh no, there was already quite enough for me. I'm sorry to hear that Deirdre is still unwell. We need everyone to be fighting fit, all hands to the deck.
MIKE: She's still suffering from the shock of our being stranded here. So many of the villagers are.
DOCTOR 2: If only they could gain a wider perspective, Mike.
MIKE: What do you mean?
DOCTOR 2: Well, you see, we are all of us stranded in the universe. Even on Earth these people were marooned, lost in space. That's just how it is. And at least this lot have got their houses and belongings with them.
MIKE: Why do you think we were brought here, Doctor? Really.
DOCTOR 2: It seems that the tussle we had with the Skishtari back-fired on all of us. I was trying to keep us tethered to Earth, they were trying to lift us away. In the end, the elastic snapped, and we went spinning off into their wormhole.
MIKE: Where are they now?
DOCTOR 2: Fortunately we shook them off in transit. Nasty creatures. Let's just hope they don't come looking for us again.

MIKE [narrating]: Later that night, he went down into the cellar and immersed himself in his task, fiddling with the massive communicator device he'd constructed. He said it was designed to monitor stray radio signals outside our bubble. I called down to him just before popping next door to see Deirdre, but he didn't reply. I could just about hear his voice as he mumbled happily away to himself, but I couldn't make out what he was saying.

DOCTOR 2: Doctor to Skishtari. Doctor to Skishtari. Are you receiving me? I understand you chaps are probably busy looking for the other fellow, but I would appreciate being rescued at some point. This lot are starting to drive me potty.

MIKE [narrating]: The next day, or at least what passed for it, saw everyone gathered in the Church Hall for the weekly Parish meeting which the Reverend Tonge had instigated.

TONGE: Good evening, everyone. Just a few announcements tonight. Firstly, to say that the Dragon will be opening its doors this evening for a special quiz night, and everyone is entitled to a free drink to mark the end of our third month marooned up here.
(Men cheer.)
MIKE: My idea, Doctor. Best keep morale up.
DOCTOR 2: Very good, Captain Yates. Everyone likes a quiz.
TONGE: The other pressing matter is, well, I don't know if anyone has noticed, but we have almost missed Christmas. Not a confession you'd expect to hear from your vicar, but I think all our minds have been elsewhere. So I am posting a schedule of services here, and we, that is, the Doctor, Captain Yates and I, have decided that it would be a good idea for us to present, as planned, our annual Christmas play, Aladdin and his magical lamp.
MAN: Are you kidding? Wouldn't the time be better spent trying to get us home?
TONGE: How exactly do you propose we do that, Ron? It's not as if the Doctor hasn't been trying to think of something.
MAN: If you ask me, he's the reason we're all flung up here in the first place.
DOCTOR 2: You mean me, sir?
MAN: Yes, I do. With all this know-how and technology you're supposed to have, what exactly are you doing to sort this mess out?
MIKE: The Doctor is working day and night to get us home.
MAN: Yeah, yeah, whatever. Pull the other one.
MAN 2: Yeah, yeah, pull the other one.
TONGE: They're turning rather nasty. Are you sure about this, Doctor? Do you still want to take part in our pantomime?
DOCTOR: I wouldn't miss it for the world, Reverend, whatever this lot think I ought to be doing.

TISH: I shall lend a hand too. You'll have a panto script written by best-selling novelist Tish Madoc.
(Sarcastic cheers.)
TONGE: Wonderful! Now, everyone, I hope you'll see the point in all of this. It's like the spirit of the Blitz, you see. We have to keep our peckers up.

MIKE [narrating]: The somewhat lively debate continued as the meeting drifted from the village hall to the Dragon Inn on the other side of the green. Soon we were all in the lounge of the quaint old pub. Whilst I was at the bar, I heard some of the villagers discussing the Doctor's revelation about the voices he had heard from beyond the force shield. They were scared and excited at the same time, but also decidedly mistrustful of the Doctor. He and I ensconced ourselves in a booth near the front windows of the pub. The Doctor was drinking cherry Brandy and looking wistfully optimistic again.

DOCTOR 2: It's only to be expected, Mike. They're bound to look at me askance, aren't they. They don't know me from Adam and yet they have to put all their trust in me.
MIKE: I suppose so, Doctor. But some of these fellow look downright mutinous.
DOCTOR 2: Then I shall have to give them something to believe in. I must push ahead in my plans to contact the inhabitants of that planet above us.

MIKE [narrating]: I don't know what it was, but something in his tone made me shiver. Even as he held out his glass to say cheers.

(Clink! The Tardis materialises outside.)
MIKE: What the devil?
DOCTOR 2: Oh dear.
MIKE: Look, slap bang in the middle of the village green. Come on.

MIKE: I don't believe it. They've made it. They've actually found us.
DOCTOR 2: Don't get too close. It may be a trap, Captain Yates.
MIKE: Nonsense, Doctor. It's the other you in there.
DOCTOR 2: Exactly.
(The Tardis door opens.)
DOCTOR: Good evening, everyone!

MIKE [narrating]: It was quite astonishing. He was so blasé, stepping out of the Police Box as if he'd just nipped off for a pint of milk.

DOCTOR: Sorry we took a little while to find you. The old girl's navigation was on the blink after that tussle with the Skishtari, and then we got delayed by a few unexpected stops. But now we're here at last. Hello. Hello there!

MIKE [narrating]: And after him came Mrs Wibbsey, looking wary and rather tired.

WIBBSEY: Oh Mike, it's so good to see you.
MIKE: And you too, Mrs Wibbsey. We've been here three months. I suppose time has moved much faster for you.
WIBBSEY: Not really. It's taken him umpteen months to get us here, with some pretty hair-raising dos on the way. The Tardis is only just back to normal now.
MIKE: But where exactly is here? Do you know where we are?
WIBBSEY: Oh, my goodness. I've just noticed. Look at all those stars in the sky. Is it always like that?
MIKE: All the time. It's always night beyond the forcefield.
WIBBSEY: Perhaps the Doctor will explain.
MIKE: Oh dear, look out. He seems to be rather embroiled at the moment.
DOCTOR 2: I hope you're not going to cause any bother now you're here.
DOCTOR: Me cause bother? Ha! I'm surprised you're not ashamed to show your face.
DOCTOR 2: Me? What have I got to be ashamed about?
DOCTOR: Still playing the innocent, are you, eh? Doesn't Mike know yet that this whole farrago is down to you?

DOCTOR 2: How dare you accuse me, sir. I've done nothing but look after these poor stranded human beings for months. Without me, they'd have been in a proper pickle.
MIKE: That is true, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Listen to me, Mike. It was this fool's messing around with those biomesh trees that helped the Skishtari rip the village off the face of the Earth!
DOCTOR 2: What nonsense! I can see that our brain has become addled with age, old chap.
DOCTOR: Oh!
DOCTOR 2: Your thinking is as woolly as your ludicrous neck wear.
DOCTOR: There's nothing wrong with my neck wear. Or my brain.
DOCTOR 2: You and your Tardis blew a big hole in Nest Cottage. You nearly sent the whole of Hexford up in a blue flash. Everyone almost went off with a bang because of your meddling.
DOCTOR: Rubbish! It's all down to you, this mess. You always were a clumsy, ham-fisted buffoon!
(Fighting.)
DOCTOR 2: Unhand me, sir!
DOCTOR: Mike, I suggest that you and your soldiers place this charlatan under arrest at once.
WIBBSEY: Ooo, he's going to do himself a mischief.
TONGE: Doctors, please. You must stop this. It's all quite unnecessary. We must work together.
MAN: Here, what's going on? Where did those two come from?
MAN 2: They just appeared out of nowhere.
MIKE: Could everyone please go back into the pub. We'll explain everything later. Just rest assured that we may have come by our best chance yet of getting home.
(Cheers.)
DOCTOR 2: Excuse me, my dear.
WIBBSEY: Here, there's no need to push.
DOCTOR: He's getting away, Mike.
MIKE: Why's he behaving so strangely?
WIBBSEY: Looks like he's heading for Nest Cottage.

MIKE [narrating]: But when we arrived back at the cottage, the other Doctor was nowhere to be seen. Mrs Wibbsey wasted no time in assessing the state of the kitchen.

WIBBSEY: You could have looked after the place a bit better.
MIKE: I'm sorry about that. It's been a bit of a struggle. We've been cooking things over the open fire.
WIBBSEY: Everything's burnt to bits!
DOCTOR: How about some supper, Mrs Wibbsey?
WIBBSEY: Huh, you'll be lucky. It's like going back to the stone age in here. Oh, my lovely pots.
DOCTOR: Why don't you have a scout round for our friend, Mike.
MIKE: Right-o, Doctor.
(Door creaks.)
WIBBSEY: (sotto) Is it as you suspected, Doctor? Are we on Rebel Moon?
DOCTOR: I'm afraid it's indisputable. Did you notice the brightest star when you looked up at the sky? It's a place you've been. The homeworld of the Holy Integrated Robotov Empire.
WIBBSEY: Can't be a coincidence, can it, that Hexford ended up here?
DOCTOR: I think the village simply went through the same wormhole as took you and me from Biomoon to Earth. It was still in existence after all those years.
MIKE: I've found him, Doctor. He's locked himself in the cellar and he says he isn't coming out. Says he's got work to do.
WIBBSEY: Sulking, more like. I don't know how you've put up with him all this time, Mike.
MIKE: I didn't have much choice. We've all had to work together.
WIBBSEY: Including that awful Tish Madoc?
MIKE: Oh, she's all right.
WIBBSEY: Did, did those hives in her back garden come with you?
MIKE: They did. Oh, but all the bees were dead. They didn't survive the journey through space. She was very upset.
WIBBSEY: Oh, thank goodness. I mean, not about the bees, but well, you can imagine what I was thinking.

DOCTOR: Of course we can, Wibbsey. It's a perfectly natural reaction. But don't worry, it's nothing to do with those Hornet creatures this time.

(Radio static.)
DOCTOR 2: Hello? Hello there. Doctor to Skishtari. Are you receiving me? Come in, I say. Would you answer please? Dratted thing. You must listen to me. I don't have much time. They may interrupt me. My situation has suddenly become much more complicated.
LUCIUS [OC]: What is it you wish to report?
DOCTOR 2: Ah, there you are. Thank goodness for that. About time too.
LUCIUS [OC]: Have you completed your mission?
DOCTOR 2: Er, well, that's what I'm ringing about, you see. I've been through Nest Cottage with a fine tooth comb.
LUCIUS [OC]: We grow impatient.
DOCTOR 2: I *will* find it, I promise you, but you must understand things have become rather more tricky for me this evening with the arrival of
LUCIUS [OC]: We will not listen to excuses. Do not contact us again until you have succeeded in meeting your targets.
DOCTOR 2: No. No, no, please, come back. I haven't finished warning you yet.
(Cellar door forced open.)
DOCTOR: Ah, a cellar rat. What are you up to with this lash-up, eh?
DOCTOR 2: I built it myself. Rather impressive, isn't it?
DOCTOR: Pretty primitive, if you ask me.
DOCTOR 2: I've been sending out intergalactic may-day's left right and centre.
DOCTOR: Yes, that's how Mrs Wibbsey and I found you. The Tardis picked your missives up, though I wouldn't call them may-days. More like love letters to Skishtari.
DOCTOR 2: My dear fellow, you must have misheard. I was *warning* everybody about them, not calling them up.
DOCTOR: Really.
DOCTOR: Of course! Would I like to me? Now then, when is supper ready? So handy to have Mrs Wibbsey back.

MIKE [narrating]: There was a curiously festive atmosphere round the candle-lit dinner table that evening. Mrs Wibbsey did us proud with a traditional roast dinner, although the meat was cooked on a spit, and it came from the Tardis's cryogenic pantry. No one could quite tell what it was. The Doctor rummaged in the cellar and produced some terrific vintage wines. There was a kind of truce for the duration. Mrs Wibbsey even made an effort with Deirdre and Tish, whom I'd invited in.

DEIRDRE: I feel a bit guilty. The other villagers won't be eating as heartily as this tonight.
DOCTOR 2: But we are the Brains Trust, my dear. We have to keep ourselves in perfect condition as we work together to do something about our predicament.
MIKE: I'll drink to that. It's certainly good to see you feeling better, Deirdre.
TISH: We've been *so* lucky to have you two resourceful men looking after us. I know Reverend Tonge tried to do his best, but sometimes I wonder if he isn't a bit inadequate. Mrs Oaks from The Laurels says she's seen him helping himself to the communion wine.
DEIRDRE: Tish, you're such a gossip. I dare say this is all going to end up in one of your novels some day.
TISH: I don't think even *my* publisher would commission me to pen an outer space adventure as outré as this one.
WIBBSEY: So, er, Doctor, these signals you said you've been picking up. Where are they from, exactly?
DOCTOR 2: Well, initially they appeared to be emanating from that large asteroid in the sky, but just lately they seem to be much closer. Almost as if they're just beyond the forcefield wall.
WIBBSEY: Mmm, sounds reasonable that you want to go out and explore then.
DOCTOR 2: Why, I'm pleased you think so. I say, Doctor, how clever of you to have found such an intelligent, astute, and dare I say, attractive companion. Much more practical than a lot of excitable dolly-birds cluttering up the Tardis. You must be a very shrewd incarnation.
DOCTOR: Mmm. Shrewd enough to know when I'm having the woolly scarf pulled over my eyes.
MIKE: Ah, is there any dessert, Mrs Wibbsey?

WIBBSEY: I'll just fetch it.
DOCTOR: Now then, perhaps you'd like to have a look at this. It's something I fetched from the Tardis earlier.
(Thud.)
MIKE: What's this?
DOCTOR: Five hundred year diary. Mine.
DOCTOR 2: So?
DOCTOR: I know my memory can be unreliable, but at one point I was rather conscientious about cataloguing my peregrinations, and I find I can't find a record anywhere of my, or should I say your, ever being here at Nest Cottage.
DOCTOR 2: Such are the mysterious ways of time travel, dear chap. You know that. It can't all be accounted for in a pocket diary.
DOCTOR: And especially not if it never happened in the first place.
TISH: Nothing ever came of raised voices, gentlemen.
DEIRDRE: I know what it's like. I've got a sister I simply can't get on with, but Mike has taught us that we all have to try and trust each other.
DOCTOR: That's just it. I don't trust *him* an inch.
DOCTOR 2: The feeling is mutual. You could be anyone.
DOCTOR: Ha!
DOCTOR 2: You look like a History lecturer in a 1970s polytechnic.
DOCTOR: Bah!
DOCTOR 2: Or that fellow in the portrait by Lautrec.
DOCTOR: Grrr.
TISH: Oh yes, Aristide Bruant. I have that print on the wall on my upstairs landing, don't I, Deirdre. And you *do* look rather like him, Doctor. Did anyone ever tell you?
DOCTOR: Yes.

MIKE [narrating]: Their quibbles and sniping lasted for the rest of the meal, and no one was able to fully appreciate Mrs Wibbsey's tinned peaches and evaporated milk. As the evening came to an end, Tish and Deirdre tactfully invited the other Doctor to stay with them.

DOCTOR: Good idea. Nest Cottage is mine.
DOCTOR 2: Rotten old place anyway. I prefer more minimalist décor. Sleek lines and so on.
DOCTOR: Rubbish.

MIKE [narrating]: I heard them singing 'Show Me The Way To Go Home' as they made their way next door, and that silly refrain suddenly held enormous poignancy. I stood on the back step looking up at the stars in the alien sky and wondered how many hundreds of light years away our home really was.

DOCTOR: Fancy a recce round the village. Mike?

MIKE [narrating]: I was pleased to be asked. I'd been concerned that I'd thought the Doctor had thought I'd been siding more with his earlier self. So off we went into the evening air.

DOCTOR: You've been doing a good job out here, Mike, holding everyone together.
MIKE: I've done my best, but it hasn't been easy. Couldn't you take us all home in the Tardis, Doctor?
DOCTOR: It's not just a question of the people, Mike. This whole village must be returned to Earth, and I don't think the church would fit through the Tardis doors.
MIKE: So, what are you going to do?
DOCTOR: I don't know yet. But if we don't act quickly, I think your bogus Doctor will. How long have you known him, Mike?
MIKE: Since UNIT first got wind of strange disturbances in the skies over Hexford. The Doctor turned up just a few days later, much to our relief. He helped us track the incursions with his equipment. Look, just why are you so suspicious of him?
DOCTOR: Remember that great tug of war we had? The Skishtari ship trying to lift the village up and the Tardis trying to put it back down. Each time I tried to counterbalance the Skishtari pull, he was increasing the hold of the biomesh trees, doing just what the Skishtari wanted.

MIKE [narrating]: Unbeknownst to us, there was an eavesdropper in the undergrowth. The other Doctor had slipped away from his hosts, and having seen us come out, he was slinking behind the hedgerows and earwigging on our every word.

MIKE: So what are these snake creatures after?
DOCTOR: Something they lost a while ago. One of their most precious objects, a Skishtari Gene Egg. The legends of a thousand planets tells how the Skishtari conquer worlds with such things. They plant them amongst an unsuspecting populace, and there they lie, often for decades, sometimes for hundreds of years, waiting for the right moment to hatch.
MIKE: And then?
DOCTOR: And then, out of it springs a lethal instrument of death and destruction. A Skishtari infant which rapidly eats its way through the indigenous population. After that, Mummy and Daddy arrive and start a very large family.
MIKE: Nasty. But what's that got to do with you and Hexford.
DOCTOR: It's a long story, Mike, but suffice it to say, I took an Egg from the Robotov Empire and brought it to Earth for safe keeping. I buried it where I thought no one would find it, under Nest Cottage. Somehow they found out and tried to take the Egg from underneath. Instead, they took the whole village and left the Egg with me.
MIKE: I see. So, where is it now, this sacred Egg?
DOCTOR: It's in the Tardis.
MIKE: (laughs) That's just about as safe as it can get, I suppose.
DOCTOR: It doesn't stop me feeling uneasy.

MIKE [narrating]: Little did we know it, but the dishevelled figure behind the hedgerows was already on his feet and pelting back to Nest Cottage through the darkness.

DOCTOR 2: At last, it's almost within my grasp.

(Rumbling boom.)
MIKE: What was that? It sounded like an explosion.
DOCTOR: Come on! We've got to get back.

(Crockery is rattling.)
WIBBSEY: Who the devil's blowing things up at this time of night?
(Door opens and closes.)
WIBBSEY: Doctor? Is that you?
DOCTOR 2: Yes, my dear. It's me.
WIBBSEY: Oh.
DOCTOR 2: Ah, you're washing up. A woman's work is never done, eh?
WIBBSEY: I'd hoped it might be the other one.
DOCTOR 2: I could be rather offended by that
WIBBSEY: The Doctor has his doubts about you. He told you that himself.
DOCTOR 2: Well, he's mistaken. I'm the genuine article. It was I who outwitted the Cybermen as they rose from their Tombs. *I* sealed the Dalek's fates in the diamond mines of Marlion, and *I* saw to those giant Crabs too.
WIBBSEY: Never mind all that now. Where are the others, and what's all that racket?
DOCTOR 2: Ah, things are getting a little out of hand. You'll be pleased to hear that the other Doctor and I are now working together. We need some equipment from the Tardis, but I seem to have mislaid my key. I notice that you have one. May I borrow it?
WIBBSEY: Certainly not! That's one of the Doctor's cardinal rules.
DOCTOR 2: I thought as much. Ah well. It's in here, is it?
WIBBSEY: Here, leave my cardigan alone!
(Brief struggle.)
DOCTOR 2: You just stay there at the sink, where you belong. Ah, yes. Here it is.
WIBBSEY: Give that back!
DOCTOR 2: I'd love to stop and chat, but I really must fetch this vital scientific equipment.
WIBBSEY: Doctor! Doctor!

MIKE [narrating]: Mrs Wibbsey flew out of the cottage and across the green after the little fellow, but the Police Box door slammed in her face.

WIBBSEY: Oh, no! What have I done? Doctor! Oh, he'll be so cross with me.

MIKE [narrating]: Meanwhile, at the perimeter of the village.

TONGE: Doctor! Mister Yates! The village is under attack! They've broken through the shielding.
DOCTOR: Who have, Reverend?
TONGE: Robots. Hundreds of them. Space robots with great big guns!

MIKE [narrating]: Our assailants had forged a portal in the force shield and were now storming through it. They were armoured robots, tall and broad, and brandishing laser weapons which they fired indiscriminately as they marched into Hexford. My two UNIT soldiers fired their rifles in unison and were evaporated on the spot. They stood no chance against the alien's weapons.

DOCTOR: Pull back everyone, Mike. Don't let them anywhere near.
SERVOROBOT: Cease firing. Resume at increase of local hostility. You will all surrender to the might of the Robotovs.
DOCTOR: Can we help you gentlemen?
SERVOROBOT: This moon is under Robotov control. You are invaders.
DOCTOR: Oh, come on. Do we look like a threat to you lot? We aren't your human rebels. This is an English country village transported here by some ghastly mistake.
TONGE: (hysterical) Ah, whoever you are, just leave us alone! We never asked to be brought here to this horrible place!
MIKE: Reverend Tonge, get back to the church. Leave this to us.
TONGE: I'm not giving in to a bunch of tin soldiers. Who do they think they are, hmm? Smashing their way in here and firing on us willy-nilly. This is our village, our home.
SERVOROBOT: Increased hostility detected.
(Weapons armed.)
DOCTOR: Reverend Tonge, get back. They mean business.
TONGE: *I* mean business. I cast you out. You may not enter here. This is our sanctuary. I'll finish off the lot of you.
MIKE: No, Reverend!
TONGE: The Lord's my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me Argh!
MIKE: You, you killed him!
DOCTOR: Don't do any more to aggravate them, Mike.
MIKE: But
DOCTOR: They'll do away with us all if we're confrontational. Look, what's your purpose here?
SERVOROBOT: We have detected the presence of the objective.
DOCTOR: What, me?
SERVOROBOT: Negative. The objective that will bring peace to the Empire.
DOCTOR: Well, who is it this time?
SERVOROBOT: Nothing will stand in the way of peace.
(Stomps off.)

MIKE [narrating} We were cast aside then, as the Robotov guards marched past us in perfect formation. There must have been nearly a hundred of them, gleaming and malign. As they went past, villagers peered out of their windows in terror as the army swept into the centre of Hexford.

MIKE: So the other Doctor was right when he said he could hear voices.
DOCTOR: Yes, and in turn they've been monitoring you lot the whole time, waiting to march in and take over. Come on. We must get back to Nest Cottage.
MIKE: This objective they're after.
DOCTOR: I have a feeling I know what it is. Come on!

DOCTOR 2: Doctor to Skishtari. Doctor to Skishtari. I think you're going to be very pleased. I've got my hands on this Egg thing you wanted.
LUCIUS [OC]: You had better not be lying to us.

DOCTOR 2: No, indeed. I'm calling you from the Doctor's Tardis. I'll just switch to visual circuits. Look. See what I'm holding in my hands. Feast your beady eyes on this.
LUCIUS [OC]: The lost Gene Egg of the Skishtari. How long it has been out of our grasp.
DOCTOR 2: You might at least congratulate me. I mean, I'm not asking for a thank you as such.
LUCIUS [OC]: You are our creature. You have simply carried out our command.
DOCTOR 2: Ah, but with cunning intelligence and skill.
LUCIUS [OC]: Keep the Egg safe. We have your coordinates. We are coming to retrieve it.
DOCTOR 2: You mean you're coming here?
LUCIUS [OC]: Immediately.
(Communication ends.)
DOCTOR 2: Oh crumbs. I think there may be some bother. What do you reckon, Mrs Wibbsey?
WIBBSEY: Mmph, mmph.
DOCTOR 2: Yes, I'm sorry I had to tie you up. I was fearful you'd scupper my plans, causing such a hullabaloo out there on the village green. Here, let me loosen your gag.
WIBBSEY: Mmph you'll never get away with this.
DOCTOR 2: Oh no? Now I've got the Tardis, I can go anywhere I like, once I've handed over the Egg. You play your cards right and I'll let you come with me. You can be my glamorous assistant.
WIBBSEY: I'd rather die!
DOCTOR 2: Oh. I hope it won't come to that.
WIBBSEY: You can't go giving the Skishtari the Egg. We've spent ages keeping it away from them. You don't understand anything.
DOCTOR 2: You'd be surprised. Oh, that's strange.
WIBBSEY: What is?
DOCTOR 2: The Egg. It moved in my hands.
(Eggshell cracking.)
DOCTOR 2: Oh golly. Was that crack there before?
WIBBSEY: It's starting to hatch.
(More cracking.)

MIKE [narrating]: The Robotov troopers moved with grim efficiency. We could only watch as they rounded all the villagers up in their nightclothes.

MIKE: It's no use, Doctor. The way to the cottage is blocked. What are we going to do?
DOCTOR: There's nothing we can do just yet, Mike. They'll be all right if they don't panic. Meanwhile, you and I need to get to the Tardis.
MIKE: But what are those robots, Doctor?
DOCTOR: Footsoldiers for a race of aristocratic automatons who have ruled this sector of space for centuries. If only we could talk to their commander.

MIKE [narrating]: Suddenly the whole of Hexford started to tremble and shake.

(Whoosh! Boom! Whoosh!)
SERVOROBOT: Silence. Do not move.
MIKE: It's another spaceship! Just like last time.
DOCTOR: Only smaller than last time. I was wondering if I'd see this chap again.
MIKE: Again?
DOCTOR: Yes. I think someone's come to settle an old score. That makes things a little more complicated. Come on, let's make the most of the distraction.

MIKE [narrating]: Whilst the Robotov soldiers stared up in amazement at the saucer overhead, we darted over towards the Tardis.

DEIRDRE: Mike, what's going on now?
MIKE: Deirdre, Tish, you'd better come with us.

MIKE [narrating]: Looking highly confused, Deirdre and Tish hurried with us to the Tardis, and together we all piled inside. We were astonished to find Mrs Wibbsey and the other Doctor

already in the control room, both gazing in alarm at a large glowing egg.

DEIRDRE: Oh, my goodness!
TISH: But it's bigger on the inside than the outside.
DOCTOR: Never mind all that. What are you two doing here?
WIBBSEY: Doctor, I'm so sorry. He pinched my key.
DOCTOR: Untie her, Mike.
DOCTOR 2: Oh, hello. I'm rather glad to see you, old chap.
DOCTOR: Have you been using the communicator?
DOCTOR 2: Oh I er
WIBBSEY: He was speaking to the Skishtari. He's working for them.
MIKE: What? Doctor, is this true? After all I've done to defend you when other people were saying you were a fraud.
DOCTOR 2: Oh, do put a sock in it, Captain Yates. You're like an old woman. I've had quite enough of listening to you.
MIKE: I beg your pardon?
DOCTOR: I thought this might be the case. What have the Skishtari promised you, eh? Whatever it is, they won't honour it. They'll take their Egg and do away with you. You are just a pawn.
DOCTOR 2: I prefer the term bounty hunter, though why they're so bothered about some old egg I can't imagine.
DOCTOR: Because it's dangerous. You don't know what it contains.
(Crack.)
WIBBSEY: I think he's about to find out.
DOCTOR: Oh?
WIBBSEY: That thing's hatching!
DOCTOR: What!
DOCTOR 2: The time is almost nigh. I must take it to my masters.
MIKE: Doctor, look at the scanner. The village green.
DOCTOR: Shh, Mike. I'm thinking.

MIKE [narrating]: Outside, a whirlpool-like vortex of light was beaming down from the Skishtari spaceship. Strange writhing shapes started to coalesce inside, and the Robotov troopers immediately began to fire upon it. Meanwhile the villagers started to flee for safely.

WIBBSEY: Oh no!
DOCTOR 2: You've rather brought this on yourself, Doctor, by stealing other people's property. Fancy hiding it under your own house. You might as well have put it under your pillow. Didn't you realise how the Skishtari are.
(Egg shell cracks more.)
DOCTOR 2: I'm going outside now. You must all stay here.
(Tardis door opens.)
DOCTOR: Don't come after me.

MIKE [narrating]: And then suddenly he was gone, darting out of the Tardis and back onto the green.

WIBBSEY: Doctor, what are we going to do?
DOCTOR: I don't know, Wibbs.
DEIRDRE: And to think we trusted him.
DOCTOR: Mike, while the Servo Robots are distracted, I want you to round up all of the villagers.
MIKE: And then what, Doctor?
DOCTOR: And then, we'll see.

MIKE [narrating]: But as we left the Tardis, laser-like beams of energy began raining down from the Skishtari ship. Each one was precisely aimed at a Servo Robot, which promptly disintegrated on contact. A full-scale massacre had broken out, and within seconds the Servo Robots had been completely obliterated. It was a ghastly scene in Hexford, as if the whole village had been dropped into the blazing pits of hell. Through the smouldering rubble, the little

figure of the other Doctor calmly picked his way towards the Skishtari ship, holding the precious Egg in front of him, towards the vortex of light. As he got nearer, a portal opened in the whirlpool. From it emerged three gigantic serpents, slithering along on glistening golden coils. Their eyes blazed scarlet, their cobra-like hoods quivering with triumph and rage as they surveyed the scene.

DOCTOR 2: I'm very pleased to see you. Against incredible odds, I have brought the thing you seek.
LUCIUS: You have done your duty.
DOCTOR 2: Er, perhaps you'd like to take it? I think it's about to go off.
LUCIUS: So it begins.
DOCTOR 2: Yes, but I, er, I don't want to be holding it when it's open.
LUCIUS: Too late. The Skishtari child is nigh.

MIKE [narrating]: We all watched with horror as the Egg finally cracked apart and a mass of white billowing smoke issued out of it, pluming high into the night sky.

DOCTOR: That's torn it.
DEIRDRE: What, what's happening?
DOCTOR: Oh, just the apotheosis of the Skishtari, that's all. And I don't use that word lightly.

MIKE [narrating]: And then coils of real scaly flesh followed the smoke into the sky, until a huge god-like serpent reared over us, its jaws dripping foul sizzling venom down through the air.

DOCTOR: Listen, everyone. We don't have much time. That creature will take a while to get acclimatised to the atmosphere, but once it does, it will destroy every living thing in its path. You've got to round up the villagers, Mike.
MIKE: Okay, Doctor. Tish, Deirdre, come with me.
DEIRDRE: We're not your troopers. You can't tell us what to do.
TISH: Shh. Come on, Deirdre. There might be wounded people out there. We've got to help.
DOCTOR: Move quietly, and just save who you can. Don't put your own lives at risk. Wibbs, do you want to go with them?
WIBBSEY: What do you think? I'm sticking with *you*, Doctor.
DOCTOR: You don't know where I'm going yet.
WIBBSEY: I think I can guess. So, let's get it over with.

DOCTOR 2: Oh no, what do you want?
DOCTOR: We've come to join the party. Couldn't leave you with all the small talk.
DOCTOR 2: Can't you see the situation's getting rather hectic? I think you should leave the diplomacy to someone with a little tact.
LUCIUS: Doctor, we meet again.
DOCTOR: Yes. Hello, Lucius. You haven't changed a bit. Bit grey round the scales, perhaps.
DOCTOR 2: You two know each other?
DOCTOR: Oh, we go way back.
LUCIUS: The Doctor is an estimable opponent.
DOCTOR: Quite right. Unlike this poor excuse for a Time Lord. So who is he then, hmm?
LUCIUS: He is a phenotype clone, grown from the DNA sample taken last time we met.
DOCTOR: What? You mean when you lashed out at me with that tongue of yours?
LUCIUS: A small tissue sample was all we required. Unfortunately the sample that was grown looked like this.
DOCTOR: Ha! (laughs) You got an earlier model instead of the superior upgrade.
DOCTOR 2: This is all ridiculous. I am the real thing. I am the Doctor, just as you are. Ask anyone.
LUCIUS: You were created for this mission alone. You are not a whole being. Your memories and personality were manufactured by us.
DOCTOR 2: But that simply can't be true.
DOCTOR: Hang on though. You can't have got memories and behaviour patterns from a DNA sample.
LUCIUS: The rest was absorbed by the Gene Egg Embryo whilst you were imprisoned inside it. Every Gene Egg retains a sentient link to the central Skishtari mind.

DOCTOR: Ooo. Then I have to hand it to you. You really are a very powerful bunch of vipers.
LUCIUS: The Skishtari are masters of genetic and spatial dimensional engineering.
DOCTOR: Ah yes. All those wormholes you keep conjuring up are very clever indeed. Like a big game of snakes and ladders?
DOCTOR 2: But hang on a minute. If I'm not who I thought I was, well, who am I? I mean, where do I fit in, as it were.
DOCTOR: You don't.
LUCIUS: The Skishtari have one remaining purpose for you. It has been planned from the start.
DOCTOR 2: Oh really?
LUCIUS: We knew this moment would arrive, when you brought the Egg to us and our god would awake.
DOCTOR 2: Ah. So I *will* have a role, a purpose in your new empire.
LUCIUS: In a manner of speaking.
DOCTOR 2: Oh good. Thank you, I
DOCTOR: You fool. Don't you realise? You're going to be that thing's first meal.
WIBBSEY: And it looks ravenous.
DOCTOR 2: Oh, my giddy Aunt!
(Hiss!)
DOCTOR: It's all right, I've got you.
DOCTOR 2: You saved my life.
DOCTOR: Yes, I'm like that.
WIBBSEY: Look out, it's rearing up to strike again.
DOCTOR: Everybody down!

MIKE [narrating]: Meanwhile, Tish and Deirdre and I were busy stumbling through the rubble and searching out the surviving villagers. We were aware of the screams over on the green, but we kept our heads and carried on with our task.

DEIRDRE: All these poor dead people. It's horrible.
MIKE: There could have been many more, Deirdre. We were lucky the new arrivals destroyed all those robots.
TISH: He's right. It could be *much* worse.
DEIRDRE: You two are proper little Pollyannas, aren't you. Look at us! Everything's gone to pot. We're rounding everyone up just so they can get eaten by some gigantic slavering snake thing.
MIKE: Calm down, Deirdre. You'll cause a panic.
DEIRDRE: Panic, he says. It's a wonder I'm not a screaming basket case.
MIKE: Look, we're all scared, my dear.
TISH: Oh wait, look. There's a man over there, but he's not from the village.
MIKE: I can't see anyone.
DEIRDRE: She's always been impulsive where men are concerned.
TISH: Hello. Who are you?

MIKE [narrating]: And then we could all see him. It was a chap in his thirties, dressed in the most immaculate regal robes. They were billowing out around him. He looked completely incongruous as he walked towards us, across the battlefield that Hexford had become.

TSAR: You're humans, and this is Hexford. Yes, I remember.
TISH: You know our village?
TSAR: I was here as a child, a long time ago.
MIKE: Where have you come from?
TSAR: I followed my Robotov guards through the forcefield. We have been engineering a semi-permeable conduit for some time.
DEIRDRE: You mean those hideous robots were yours?
TISH: I'm afraid they've all been destroyed.
TSAR: Oh, that is unfortunate. But there are many others on my world. Forgive me. I am Alex, Tsar of the Holy Integral Robotov Empire.
DEIRDRE: You are from that asteroid. You were picking up our signals.
(Roar.)

TSAR: The Skishtari infant. He is calling to me.
MIKE: Wait. You can't go there. It's too dangerous.
TSAR: You do not understand. Please step out of my way.

MIKE [narrating]: We cautiously followed as he marched onto the village green and straight up to the monstrous beast that had hatched from the Egg. The Tsar paid no attention to anyone else. Instead, he simply stared up into the eyes of the newly-born serpent god. We could hardly believe his bravery, standing there beneath the swaying jaws of that monstrous serpent.

(Roar.)
TSAR: How big you have grown.
WIBBSEY: What's he doing? Who is that man, Mike?
MIKE: He just appeared.
TISH: He says he came with the robots. He said he was their King or something.
DEIRDRE: The Tsar, that's what he said.
WIBBSEY: Well, that's not the Tsar, is it, Doctor?
DOCTOR: Don't you recognise him, Mrs Wibbsey? It's our young friend Alex. He's grown up.
MIKE: What do you think he's doing, Doctor?
DOCTOR: It's a reunion. Alex and the Skishtari child know each other of old.
DEIRDRE: Look, it's as if he's talking to the creature.
DOCTOR 2: He seems to be pacifying it. I was about to play it a tune on my recorder.
DOCTOR: Then he arrived just in time.
TSAR: Hush, hush. No, you must listen to this.
LUCIUS: Move away from the Skishtari child. Who are you to speak to him?
TSAR: Don't you recognise me? I'm the monster you instructed Father Gregory to create, and I am here to put an end to what you began. This child no longer belongs to you. You cannot force him to make war on your behalf.
LUCIUS: You know little of Skishtari biology. Each hatching infant has the power and intent to swallow a population whole.
TSAR: That's all well and good if it hasn't spent its first three years communing with a host organism. Even across all of Space and Time I have felt its mind reaching out to me since we were parted.
LUCIUS: That is impossible.
TSAR: No, Skishtari, it is plain fact. And now you will experience at first hand the unforeseen consequences of your actions. Brother, kill.
(Hiss!)
MIKE: It's attacking its own kind!
DOCTOR: It's ravenous, in a feeding frenzy.
LUCIUS: Stop this. What are you doing?
TSAR: You see, Lucius, now your god listens only to me, his true master, and he is very hungry.
DOCTOR: No, Alex, you mustn't!
DOCTOR 2: Better them than us, that's what I say. Come on, let's hop it.
(Roar!)
WIBBSEY: It's killed all three of them.
DOCTOR: Alex is getting revenge for the Skishtari's crimes of the past. It's poetic in a grisly way. The snake that devours itself.
WIBBSEY: It's like history repeating itself. You remember when he was a boy with that dragon he unleashed?
DOCTOR 2: The Skishtari are beaming down reinforcements.
DOCTOR: They don't stand a chance against that infant.
WIBBSEY: Oh, this is horrible.
MIKE: How many of those snake things were aboard that spaceship, Doctor?
DOCTOR 2: A ship like that? Only about ten.
DOCTOR: The child will quickly dispose of them all, and then whom will it turn on?
(Roar!)
MIKE: Doctor, all of the surviving villagers are here. Surely we could get away in the Tardis now?
DOCTOR: Not yet, Mike. I must get the whole village home.
DOCTOR 2: Why? It's only bricks and mortar, isn't it?

DOCTOR: Hexford village is so much more than that.
TISH: And so say all of us. But how are you going to get a whole village back through space?
DOCTOR: By assuming control of the Skishtari ship.
WIBBSEY: Are you sure that's wise?

MIKE [narrating]: But the Doctor was suddenly full of action, dashing over to the young Tsar as the last of the Skishtari was devoured. The man seemed stunned, dazed by recent events.

DOCTOR: Alex, it's the Doctor.
TSAR: He recognises me, Doctor. He hears me. He was born in confusion and I gave him clarity. He destroyed his own kind at my behest.
DOCTOR: He certainly seems calmer for the time being.
TSAR: He is the Serpent God rising from the ashes, just as the legends of our galaxies foretold.
DOCTOR: The legends didn't reckon on you, Alex. You've had to learn a great deal.
WIBBSEY: Alex?
TSAR: Mrs Wibbsey.
WIBBSEY: You've become a man.
TSAR: When the Doctor took me home, I was made the new Tsar. I have ruled now for twenty years and brought peace to the Robotov and human factions.
WIBBSEY: Well, I'm very proud of you.
DOCTOR: Take the Skishtari infant back with you, Alex. Find it a planet with sustainable food source, and teach it to become part of that peace you mentioned. You know what it's like to be a child out of time.
TSAR: Thank you for everything, both of you.

MIKE [narrating]: Alex led the Skishtari child away, across the desolate village towards the force shield perimeter. The Doctor turned back to the rest of us and announced that he and his bogus counterpart were going to unite in the effort to get us all home.

WIBBSEY: Are you sure you can trust him?
DOCTOR: I have to. He's a creation of the Skishtari, so he'll know how to operate their navigational systems.

MIKE [narrating]: After a terse exchange about who should go first, it took barely a twiddle of their two sonic screwdrivers to zap them aboard the Skishtari ship.

DOCTOR 2: The last thing I wanted was to be back aboard one of these things. What do you want me to do?
DOCTOR: Oh, a little task. Something to help salvage your reputation. I want you to pilot this ship back to Earth.
DOCTOR 2: A doddle.
DOCTOR: Good, because I'm going to trust you with a very precious cargo.
DOCTOR 2: Trust me? Huh, that'll be a first.
DOCTOR: And hopefully a last. Once you've got this under your belt, you can go your own way.
DOCTOR 2: What, really?
DOCTOR: Yes, really. Now listen. I can't just send the village spinning into the wormhole and hope for the best. It needs to be towed by this ship and its navigational computer. I want you to reactivate those biomesh trees of yours and their magnetic beams, so you can pull Hexford village and Nest Cottage back to their rightful place on Earth.
DOCTOR 2: You don't ask for very much, do you, old chap.

MIKE [narrating]: Several hours later, the Skishtari ship was ready to depart.

DOCTOR: Mike, I'm expecting you to look after everyone in the village. The ride will be just as bumpy as when you came here.
MIKE: Of course, Doctor. You can rely on me.
DOCTOR: Mrs Wibbsey and I will follow in the Tardis, but until we get back, I'm placing Nest Cottage in your hands.

MIKE: Right-o, Doctor. You *are* coming straight back, though, aren't you?
DEIRDRE: Are we really going to be able to get home, Mike?
TISH: I'll believe it when I see it.
DEIRDRE: Mrs Wibbsey always said the Doctor could work wonders.
DOCTOR: Did you, Wibbsey?
WIBBSEY: Now, don't get big-headed.
TISH: Uh oh, here comes trouble.
DOCTOR 2: Hello there. We're all powered up and ready to go.
TISH: Surely you aren't going to leave us at the mercy of this imposter?
DOCTOR: Don't worry, he'll look after you.
DOCTOR 2: Well, come on then, everyone. We're leaving within the hour. It's rather exciting, actually.
DEIRDRE: Tish was quite fond of him before we knew he was evil.
DOCTOR: More misguided than evil, I'd say, Deirdre. I'm afraid he won't be around for long. Phenotype clones have a very short life. I'd say he's got months to live.
MIKE: Then what will happen?
DOCTOR: Then one day he'll simply fade away. Might be kinder not to tell him.
TISH: Of course. We'll make him as welcome as we can until then.
DOCTOR: Good, good. Come on, Wibbs. The Tardis awaits.
WIBBSEY: Oh, I'm ready.
MIKE: Goodbye both. We'll see you at Nest Cottage.
DOCTOR: One day, Mike. One day.
(The Tardis dematerialises.)

MIKE [narrating]: We watched the Tardis leave, and then braced ourselves for the journey of a lifetime. I told the villagers that we must never speak of these strange events. After all, everyone would think we were mad.

DEIRDRE: You'll stay in the village, won't you, Mike?
MIKE: Yes, I told the Doctor I'd look after Nest Cottage until he gets back.
TISH: We hope that won't be all that's keeping you in Hexford, don't we, Deirdre?
DEIRDRE: Mmm, yes.
MIKE: Hmm? Oh. Oh, of course not.
TISH: You know, I think I've had an idea for my next novel. Romance in the Milky Way.

(The Tardis materialises.)
DOCTOR: We've landed, Mrs Wibbsey.
WIBBSEY: What, back at Nest Cottage?
DOCTOR: Not quite. I've put us down on the outskirts of Hexford. Look, there on the scanner, the village is back safely in one piece.
WIBBSEY: Oh, thank goodness for that. Hey, can you zoom in with that thing?
DOCTOR: Like this, you mean?
WIBBSEY: Ooo, look. There's Tish and Deirdre wotsit bustling about.
DOCTOR: Oh yes. And Mike, helping the landlord of the Dragon put his sign back up.
WIBBSEY: Uh oh, watch out. There's your clone, hurtling across the green. Up to no good, no doubt.
DOCTOR: I gave him strict instructions to remove all those biomesh trees and dispose of them carefully. I dare say with Mike looking over his shoulder he will. Everything's getting back to normal, Mrs Wibbsey.
WIBBSEY: So, that's the end of all that.
DOCTOR: Quite. Well then, Nest Cottage awaits.
(Tardis door opens.)
WIBBSEY: Yes. Ha. We could have a little celebration. Nothing too lavish, of course.
DOCTOR: Good idea. Off you go then.
WIBBSEY: Eh? Are, aren't you coming with me?
DOCTOR: I have other things to do. I'm expected elsewhere.
WIBBSEY: You, you mean you're leaving me here?
DOCTOR: Well, this is your home now. The whole business with the Skishtari has been something of a diversion.
WIBBSEY: I should say so. It's been fun though, hasn't it?

DOCTOR: Tremendous, as ever.
WIBBSEY: You know, one of these days I wouldn't say no to another little jaunt.
DOCTOR: Neither would I. I never do. Say hello to Mike and Deirdre and everyone for me.
WIBBSEY: Won't you even
DOCTOR: No, I'll just slip away.
WIBBSEY: All right then. I suppose this is au revoir.
(Tardis door closes. Birds singing.)
DOCTOR: Au revoir, Mrs Wibbsey!
(The Tardis dematerialises.)
WIBBSEY: Now then, Wibbs, he's bound to turn up again one day. I mean, while there's Mike Yates to keep in order. Now, what about this party.